XON POPULARITY REVIVING IN SOUTH

President's Visit to 3 States and Republican Efforts Help [illegible]

By ROY REED

[illegible] Nixon's [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] South.

[illegible] weekend [illegible] Georgia and Tennessee is expected to boost it further.

Southerners have practically stopped calling for the President's resignation or impeachment. [illegible] conservative Southern [illegible] have begun to [illegible].

[illegible] never for [illegible] peaked after the firing of the special prosecutor Archibald Cox, but [illegible] the Montgomery Advertiser, which is moderately conservative, said [illegible] Monday: "We expect [illegible] to subside, [illegible] Nixon [illegible] to glue together the shattered pieces

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of his Presidency [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] voters and large [illegible] contributors. [illegible] a steady increase in the number of small [illegible].

[illegible] of the President's popularity is [illegible]

vision. The backlash against the press and the broadcasters is the severest since the civil rights movement of the nineteen-sixties.

One of the unexpected beneficiaries of the Watergate scandal seems to be Gov. George C. Wallace of Alabama. Apparently anticipating an eventual shift toward Mr. Nixon, Mr. Wallace has steadfastly refused to discuss Watergate, even privately. He has sat quietly in Montgomery and watched his [illegible] grow to more than [illegible] a day and his financial contributions increase [illegible] in recent months.

According to the Gallup Poll, Mr. Nixon has consistently been more popular in the South than in the rest of the country. In January, the poll found that [illegible] per cent of the Southerners questioned approved of the way Mr. Nixon was handling his job, compared with 6[illegible] per cent of the nation as a whole.

When his national approval dropped to 45 per cent last June, the South still gave him 50 per cent. And during the first week of November, when his national standing fell to 27 per cent, he still commanded 34 per cent in the South.

Change Seems Clear

Although no scientific polls have been taken in recent days, it is reasonably certain that his standing here has begun to climb again. A number of informal polls across the South have indicated a reversal of his declining popularity.

Radio station WJDX in Jackson, Miss., asked its listeners one day last week to call and say whether they favored Mr. Nixon's remaining in office. Of 377 callers, 340 said yes.

The Jackson Daily News printed a Page 1 coupon with a similar question and got an even higher return in Mr. Nixon's favor.

An informal poll by the Republican party in Fort Smith, Ark., last week showed Mr. Nixon with a solid majority [illegible]. A coupon poll by The Nashville Banner gave Mr. Nixon [illegible]-to-1 majority a [illegible] ago. The Banner [illegible] conservative leadership and Fort Smith is one of the more conservative cities of Arkansas.

Except in a few liberal metropolitan centers such as Atlanta, letters to the editor across the South have begun to run heavily in Mr. Nixon's favor.

In Mississippi, even liberal Democrats agree with Clarke Reed, the state Republican chairman, in his estimate of the effect of Watergate in that state.

"It's hard to believe that it hasn't hurt us, but I can't see any evidence that it has," he said last weekend. "Our big money contributors are a little worried about giving now, but our small contributors have increased 10 per cent since Watergate."

Although many Southern Republicans are keeping a distance [illegible] Nixon, there seems to be little evidence of permanent damage to state Republican parties in the South.

Watergate has had little effect on Republican candidates in the handful of elections in the South this year. The party lost the municipal administration of Louisville, Ky., but kept the governorship of Virginia. It lost two mayors in small towns in Mississippi, but it gained two more.

The Republican state convention in North Carolina two weeks ago [illegible] record of 3,500 persons. It was held in a [illegible] arena. Five years ago, a Raleigh newspaperman said, the Republicans of that state held their convention in a building no bigger than a basketball court.

Dillard Munford of Atlanta, a convenience food chain millionaire and a Georgia Republican [illegible], said this year's [illegible] had made it more difficult to get money from large contributors.

"People are real skittish," he said, referring to large donors.

But Robert Shaw, the Republican state chairman in Georgia, said small contributions had increased in spite of Watergate. He said $10-a-month contributions had doubled in Georgia since summer. Republican chairmen in half a dozen southern states said the same thing.

Leaders Are Active

Perhaps one reason for the relatively light damage to the state parties is the rallying of party leaders in recent weeks. Gov. Ronald Reagan of California, former Gov. John B. Connally of Texas, and George Bush, the Texan who is the Republican national chairman, have all made speaking visits to the South in the last two weeks, as has Mrs. Anne Armstrong, the counselor to the President, and her [illegible].

Southern Republicans have held a number of successful fund-raising dinners this fall.

One state party chairman, Clarence Warner of Oklahoma, started a campaign to reverse President Nixon's flagging popularity in his state and now a number of other states are doing the same thing. Several petition drives are under way urging support of Mr. Nixon.

"I swear to goodness, it just turned around," Mr. Warner said of the President's popularity in his state after the beginning of his campaign. "We've turned it into an ongoing campaign. We're putting ads in the papers. We're having people write their Congressmen. We're passing out the addresses of the television network presidents. It's really spreading. I've had letters from 30 states."

A number of reasons are offered to explain the apparent reversal of Mr. Nixon's and the Republicans' fortunes in the South.

"Southerners are stronger in their loyalties," said Jim Boyce, the Louisiana Republican chairman.

"People down here say, 'Bet[illegible] [illegible] President,'" said Mr. [illegible]

Patricia Derian, the Mississippi Democratic national committeewoman. "Southerners are used to having an authority figure."

The main reason for the reversal seems to be a renewed disenchantment of Southerners with the national news media. J. Wesley Watkins, a liberal Mississippi Democrat, traces it to the civil rights movement of the nineteen-sixties when white Southerners in large numbers lost faith in television network news and in national newspapers and magazines. Now, he said, when President Nixon says one thing and the news media say another, Southerners assume the President is right.

Anti-media feeling has risen strongly in recent weeks. Hundreds of letters to the editors of major newspapers sound like this one from [illegible] Westmoreland to The Memphis Commercial Appeal last Sunday:

"It seems to me that the greatest threat to this country is not so much a[illegible] Supreme Court or an impure President as [illegible] slanted [illegible] minds of the masses of Americans who are either too [illegible] or too indifferent to think for themselves."

Analysis Criticized

Television station WWL in New Orleans reported that it logged 180 telephone calls last Saturday night after Mr. Nixon's appearance before The Associated Press Managing Editors meeting at Disney World, Fla. None of the callers criticized the President, the station said. All 180 of them assailed the "instant" analysis of Mr. Nixon's performance by correspondents of the Columbia Broadcasting System.

For months, reporters have tried without success to get Governor Wallace to comment on Watergate. Charles S. Snider, chairman of the continuing Wallace campaign here, which apparently is aiming at the 1976 Presidential election, made a fairly firm defense of the President in an interview this week. That could be an indication of Mr. Wallace's recognition that Southern voters are ready to rally around Mr. Nixon.

Watergate should not overshadow the "many, many things" that Mr. Nixon has accomplished, such as expanding dealings with China and ending the Vietnam war, Mr. Snider said.

Mr. Wallace's mail and financial contributions have increased dramatically in recent months and some of that is due to Watergate, Mr. Snider said. People are sending $15,000 to $20,000 a day to Mr. Wallace, he said.

One letter writer, L. D. Pearson of Monterey Park, Calif., said: "In view of Agnew, in view of Watergate, in view of the economy, etc., etc., here is yet another donation to encourage Governor Wallace and the campaign." He enclosed $10.